

INTERVIEW WITH JUDY GROVER
BY MARK MADISON, APRIL 21, 2001

MR. MADISON: This is Mark Madison, doing an interview with Judy Grover in Shepherdstown, West Virginia on April 21, 2001. We usually start out Judy, just asking where you were born?

MRS. GROVER: I was born in Upland [sic?], California July 16, 1940.

MR. MADISON: What was your schooling?

MRS. GROVER: I went through grammar and high school there in public schools, except for first grade when I was sent to parochial school. It was kind of a boarding school, because I was an only child and my folks thought that I needed to be around other children. I was so homesick that I came home after one year. I skipped second grade because I got too much of an education. So when I graduated from High School at sixteen, I was kind of ahead of myself. I did go to Junior College and I met Jerry. So then we went to Utah State, and he finished up. I never did get my Bachelor's degree, but I had enough Biology classes and secretarial classes that was able to do O.K.

MR. MADISON: What years were these when you were at Utah?

MRS. GROVER: I graduated from High School in 1957. Then I went to Junior College and on to Utah State. We were married in 1959 and then I went to work. I got my "putting hubby through" Utah State. That's my "Ph.D."!

MR. MADISON: What type of work were you doing?

MRS. GROVER: I was a Secretary. I worked for a Defense Plant, Thyacal. There was an explosion of the Discovery [Space Shuttle] that blew up a few years ago. That was the Minuteman Missiles that we worked on in 1960 that blew up. It was the "o" rings that we had worked on. I worked in the Instrumentation and Testing section and they would literally blow up these engines every night. I would get to type up the list that they would follow. There were be a number, fifty digits long and one would change. These were called Instrumentation and Test Lists, so that's what I typed.

MR. MADISON: That's interesting work.

MRS. GROVER: It was interesting and then, to see it evolve as time went on was nice.

MR. MADISON: Did Jerry [Grover, her husband] take a job with FWS shortly thereafter, or did you work for us first?

MRS. GROVER: No, he did. Basically, he was working for the State of California, seasonally, until he got his degree. Then he went back to work for California and sent applications everywhere, to every State. He finally got some offers, I think the first one was Galveston, Texas and other one was Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Finally, he got one from the Boston office, in Region 5. Then, he went to work. I gave up my working for a while because when he graduated and went back to work for the State, worked for Convair, which was another big Defense Plant. That was basically secretarial work again.

MR. MADISON: So then, you guys moved to Boston?

MRS. GROVER: Well, actually, we went to White Sulfur Springs, West Virginia. We were Fish Hatcheries within Region 5. And there had been an old policy; they didn't have College graduates at Fish Hatcheries and this is how they were going to get them. They brought them back east, clear across the country. We weren't the only ones. They hired us, and we came at our own expense, across country. All of a sudden, "Well, you've got a job, but this is what it is"?

MR. MADISON: Was it a culture shock moving to West Virginia from California?

MRS. GROVER: It was. It was also a long ways away from home. It was just Jerry and I, and we didn't have a whole lot of family back here, in fact, there was none. We were young, and he had a job. \$4,040.00 a year was the salary. This was in 1961. I staid home, and got pregnant and started having little boys. That's what I did; was be a Fish and Wildlife wife. We moved quite frequently in those years.

MR. MADISON: How often did you move? That's changed a little bit recently. It would be interesting to look at.

MRS. GROVER: Basically they said, "You're a GS-5, you started out and if you want a "7" you have to move to another Hatchery". And this is what they did; they'd just pick everybody up, and just move you. And the moving was different then. We didn't have to buy and sell a house because we were in the Hatchery house. That was another interesting thing; you just kind of drove into the Hatchery and, "O.K. where's our house"? And it was over there, and you were happy that you had a roof over your head. Our oldest, Jeff was born there, so we were born there. We were there for about a year and a half, and they moved us to Leetown, just down the road here, and Jerry got his "7". He acted as the Assistant Manager, but they needed an Assistant Manager in about four months, at Craigbrook, Maine. So they picked us up, and moved us again. That was a winter move. And it was a difficult one because my father had just died. My mother was living with us, and she was a basket case, and I was a half of a basket case. Our little boy was a year old. It was the first move, of any distance, with a baby. It was the middle of winter.

MR. MADISON: And you were going to Maine.

MRS. GROVER: And we were going to Maine! I mean, it can snow here too. It was kind of like this, the moving van would say that they were going to be there at eight o'clock on Tuesday morning. So you clean out the refrigerator, you eat all of the food or throw it away. You pack all of the bedding in the boxes and you sit, and wait for the moving men to come. He did that to us for three days; saying that he was going to be there the next morning, and it was difficult. The third morning we didn't totally believe him, so we didn't do anything. It was snowing so hard that we couldn't even see the moving can in front of the house. We took off for Maine, and it was snowing hard, all through Pennsylvania. We went up through New York, and I remember it was snowing hard in Massachusetts. When we got to Maine, it was so cold. I mean it was like twenty-five degrees below zero. There was no furniture yet. We had to stay in a hotel. In those years, when you moved, when you got to your duty station, all of your per diem stopped. It didn't matter if had furniture in your house or not. So we had to put ourselves up in a hotel; which was [unintelligible] Lodge. It was a lovely place to stay, but too expensive for our blood. Eventually the furniture got there, and we had two nickels, maybe. I can remember spending an old silver dollar that I had in my wallet to buy groceries. I didn't have enough greenbacks, and so I spent my silver dollar.

MR. MADISON: Those times were rough.

MRS. GROVER: Yeah, they were!

MR. MADISON: What was it like living in the Hatchery houses? Were they usually nice houses?

MRS. GROVER: Yeah, they were nice. They were basic. You usually only had one bathroom. The kids grew up, and all of a sudden all five of you are using one bathroom it got a little crowded. Sometimes were upstairs, and downstairs and when you had little kids, you didn't want to separate Mom and Dad from the kids, but we had to do the best we could. They were basic housing. There weren't any dishwashers, or microwaves in those days.

MR. MADISON: Was it isolated living on the Hatcheries?

MRS. GROVER: Yeah, it was isolated. I chose not to work when I had little children, and that was fine. We didn't have a whole lot of money, but then we didn't have a whole lot of wants either. It was just usually that we'd get ready to move again. In Maine, our second little boy was born. The year that he was born was a pretty good weather year. We didn't have a blizzard on January 3rd, when he was due. The year before, no one could get out of the Hatchery for like two weeks. My Doctor said, "You will come to

Bangor, and we will make an appointment to have this baby. We are not going to wait". There were no complications or anything. But then, the next summer, we moved again.

MR. MADISON: Where did you to after this?

MRS. GROVER: We went to the Courtland In-Service Training School in New York. We opted to move ourselves, because in those days, when you went to the In-Service Training School, you just basically were detailed. Sometimes for six, nine or ten months and you didn't really leave your duty station. At that point, we were trying to get back west again. Grandmas, and Grandpas were back west. So we decided that we would move to Portland and we'll hope that we can get out to Region 1.

MR. MADISON: With you guys in Maine, you went away about as far as you could.

MRS. GROVER: Oh, I know. We couldn't go any further! I really wish I could have appreciated it more. I wish that I had been older, and wiser, and maybe that we hadn't been quite so poor. But we didn't know any different. After that year in Courtland, Jerry did get a job out in Region 1. We went to Winthrop, Washington which was about as far north as you could get in Washington State. It was just about thirty miles from the Canadian border.

MR. MADISON: Was Jerry a Hatchery Manager at this point?

MRS. GROVER: No, he was still basically acting as an Assistant. He was still a GS-7 and he was a "7" at three Hatcheries. Then Region 1 gave him is "9" and the next spring we went on to Ennis, Montana. This was long before Region 6 was developed, and Montana was part of the Portland region. So we went to Montana. That was a nice cold place, too!

MR. MADISON: They never wanted to move you south!

MRS. GROVER: Winthrop was a very snowy place too. That was an interesting and very pretty place. All along we were meeting nice people. When we got to Montana, that was in the Medicine Valley and it's beautiful place. We had a third little boy there.

MR. MADISON: Was it hard on the kids, the moving?

MRS. GROVER: No, our kids were real good about it. Even when they got older, they just threw their toys in the back of the car, and off we'd go!

MR. MADISON: Where did you go from Montana?

MRS. MADISON: We went back to California. This was funny, because I cried when we left California and went to While Sulfur Springs. And Jerry said, "I can't believe it, you are crying and I am moving you back to California"! But it was hard. Every time I moved, I had kind of gotten my roots down there. But we went to Coleman, California. It was interesting. We were only a day's drive from where my mother lived. The kids got to see a little more of Grandma. That was a neat Hatchery. Jerry ended up then, supervising that whole complex, from Portland, many years later. When he retired, he had a real soft spot in his heart for Coleman.

MR. MADISON: Did you go to the Regional Office then?

MRS. GROVER: No. Then we went to Washington, D.C. So we went back across the country again. This was kind of interesting because we had acquired a Siamese cat when we were in Courtland, New York. So we moved him across country. We moved him back across country to Washington, D. C. That was the Departmental Training Program, so we were basically did like we did with Courtland where we moved ourselves. But this one you took just temporary stuff. You didn't take your furniture. You rented a house and furniture. You had your dishes, your pots and pans, and your clothes and that was about it. We moved to D.C. and lived in Alexandria in a rented house. Jerry worked and went to school there at Departmental Training. Our kids had started school by then, so that was interesting; being literally in the city, where we had been out in the suburban woods, basically. Then, the next year, we moved back, but not to Coleman! We went to Carson National Fish Hatchery on the Columbia River. Then, Jerry was a Hatchery Manager. He had gotten his "11" when he went to Coleman, and then he became an "11" Hatchery Manager at Carson. Five years we were there, so that was a long time!

MR. MADISON: You must have gotten somewhat settled.

MRS. GROVER: Yeah. Still we were in Hatchery housing though. People we beginning to want to move off of Hatcheries. But we really didn't have enough money to think about buying a house. When the Hatchery was like fourteen miles from town, down a very snowy road, it would be too hard to commute back and forth. Our kids were way into school by then. I went to work at Carson. That was when the gasoline crisis started.

MR. MADISON: So was this 1973 or 1972?

MRS. GROVER: Yeah, from 1972 to 1977. All of a sudden there wasn't enough gasoline and Jerry couldn't get anybody to be the Clerk, out at the Hatchery. He had had four Service Wives [as Clerks] because there were quite of Forest Service people living in the Hatchery because we had far more housing than was needed. Now, when you buy bagged food for fish, you don't need all of the labor to work there, so we had excess housing. But no Forest Service wives were going to work, so I went to work, sixteen hours a week, four hours a day, four days a week. I was his Clerk, and it was funny. It

was kind of like; he thought that I knew everything that he did. I said, “No, I’m not going to learn by osmosis”. But I learned, and it was my first government job. The Personnel Officer in Portland literally had to give me special permission because of the laws; you don’t work for your family, but I did. I worked for a year, and then he found a Forest Service wife that wanted to go to work. By that time the Area Office concept was beginning to come in. He wanted to go to the Area Office, and he applied thinking that he could get Olympia or Sacramento, or Boise. We got Jacksonville, Florida. So in 1977, that very same kitty cat that had already been across the country three times went back. We lived in Florida for five years, and bought our own house. That was the first time that we were able to do that. It was fun. We were able to live in a neighborhood and be a real person. There were five years, before they did away with Area Offices. Our two older children; Jeff was out of High School and into Junior College. He was a musician and his music teacher suggested that he go into the Military Band. He was going to stay on the east coast. The second boy had graduated from High School, and he was going to stay on the east coast. So we were thinking, “They’re closing our office, we want a job on the east coast”. We thought, “Good, Washington, D.C., get it out of the way”. There were not jobs in Washington, D.C. mainly because there were closing all of those offices and there was an excess of managers. But Salmon Hatcheries called so back to Portland we went. We left the two older kids on the east coast. That was hard. It was hard on our younger son, and it was hard on me because all of a sudden our family went from five to three. The younger one was coming into High School. I realized that I needed to go to work. There wasn’t enough money. We couldn’t sell our house in Florida. That was in the days when there were “due on sale” clauses on mortgages, and it was a Military town. So we had a house in Florida and a job in Oregon, and a kid in College in North Carolina.

MR. MADISON: Geez! So you went back to work?

MRS. GROVER: I went back to work. I went to work in Personnel. The same Personnel Officer that gave me permission to go to work at the Hatchery; I went to work for him. I started out as a GS-4 or 5. Then, the next year wouldn’t you know, the job in Washington, D. C. opened up. Actually, it was just a little less than two years. Because we finally sold the house in Florida; it was kind of like we put the middle son on the plane to go back to College in North Carolina on January 3rd. We gave him the last dollar that we had because we were paying for a house in Florida and renting a house in Oregon. Jerry got a call that afternoon, and the house sold. Everything fell into place. We sold a house, built a house, and lived in it a year before we went to Washington, D. C. That was in 1984. I got a job in Personnel back in Washington, D.C. I worked for Joe Hyatt. That’s why Joe is such a good friend of mine. Then there was all kinds of reorganization in the Service, and Jerry didn’t have a job in Washington, D. C. I found a job with the Regional Solicitor, which I thought was very interesting. You still work for the Department of the Interior, but I had a much bigger; you were looking over the Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, Mines and all of them. I worked for the Regional Solicitor in Portland, Oregon for three years.

Meanwhile, Jerry got a job after about four months, and back to Portland he went. Then we were able to stay. We got into our house again.

MR. MADISON: So you hadn't sold the house there?

MRS. GROVER: No, we rented it. It wasn't even a year old. And it was just like the way we wanted it. I think that Jerry got a three to five-year assignment, so it looked like it wasn't going to be forever. They were having trouble getting people into Washington. People did not want to get in there, and feel like they couldn't get out again. It wasn't that we didn't want to go, but we had moved so much that it was hard. We still didn't have any money. We were still poor!

MR. MADISON: All of your money must have gone to moving expenses!

MRS. GROVER: Yeah, because basically, the moving allowances weren't as good as they are now. Somehow it just never covered everything. It was hard, not selling the house in Florida. You kept it for months after you weren't living in it anymore. But by that time, I had worked my way up to a GS-7. At least I was making a few more nickels. The kids were getting older and going to College, and having to pay those expenses, but I worked for the Regional Solicitor. Then, after three years the Regional Director's Secretary out in Region 1 retired. Jerry said that he didn't want me working in that job. He thought that I was too close. Mark Plennart was the Regional Director and he interviewed me, and I really wanted that job, so I went for it. It was fun, I enjoyed that job, I really did. I could see how everything worked. I had lived it. I had worked at the field office, and I had working at the Washington office and then I worked at the Regional office too. I am still married to the Service after all of these years, but then I got to work, and this is an odd word that they use, but they call the Regional Director's Secretary the "head bitch of the Region". I'm not kidding, every piece of mail that came to the Region came to my desk. I had to decide which department would handle all of the requests that came in. There were an awful lot of decisions made by my desk. Of course by that time, they had controlled correspondence in Washington, D. C. That was the Red Folder. So I started the Red Folders out there.

MR. MADISON: So you're the one to blame.

MRS. GROVER: I am! They still have them out there. If somebody was going to put a due date on it in Washington, I was going to put a due date on it out there. I started that out there, and made people tow the mark! But that was fun.

MR. MADISON: And that's where you spent the rest of your time in the Service?

MRS. GROVER: Yes, that's where I spent the rest of my career.

MR. MADISON: Is there anything interesting that happened when you were there, that you care to share?

MRS. GROVER: I was working for Mark Plennart, he was a very good Regional Director. This man made decisions. All of the people who worked for him were happy to have him there, because if you went up to him with a problem and he made a decision, it was either, "Hell yes, or hell no". And he was fun to work for. He lost his daughter, she got sick and died, and it was really hard to try and help him to still do his job of running the Region during this. For course, we went through the Spotted Owls. That was such a controversy out there, and I had been in the middle of it in the Solicitor's office. The attorney that handled the Bureau of Land Management was on one side of my desk. And even though I worked for the Regional Solicitor, I worked for all of the twenty-five attorneys. And the attorney that represented the Fish and Wildlife Service and was trying to stop the BLM from cutting down the forest and killing all of the Spotted Owls was on the other side of my desk. So the Spotted Owl dilemma ran our lives.

MR. MADISON: I can imagine. Klinger still talks about it.

MRS. GROVER: It was difficult. I worked with David Klinger in Washington, D. C. because Public Affairs and Personnel shared a corridor. I knew David, and when we all worked together out in Portland, telephone calls would come in; people were asking what was going to happen. I had to give a lot of these calls to David. We would be put on the hot seat a lot. There were Judges telling us what to do, by what day and of course all of the loggers were starving to death because wouldn't let them cut the trees down. One of the most interesting things that happened, and in this of course, politics got involved; President Clinton said that if he was elected, he would go out and mediate this situation. We had a Forest Conference in April of 1993 when he was first elected, and I got to sit in on that. That was very interesting. Basically, I was a doorkeeper. I got to stand inside the door and make sure that nobody came in. We had the Secretaries of Labor and Interior and Commerce who were all there trying to represent, as well as the President and the Vice President. People came from all over the northwest, appealing their cases. The loggers, and the forest products people were saying, "We've got to have this, and we've got to keep these people working". We in the Fish and Wildlife Service realized that if they kept cutting, that in ten years there would be no more forest. We wondered how they couldn't see this. I remember President Clinton standing up and saying, that no one was going to be happy with him. The environmentalists weren't going to be happy because they were going to let them cut a little bit. The loggers weren't going to be happy because they couldn't cut all they wanted. So it was very interesting. It was quite a day. It was literally all day long. We, who were working in there had to go and be cleared by Secret Service. We arrived by bus at like 6:00 A.M., and the meeting convened at maybe nine or ten. We had Secret Service all over the place. It was very interesting. Something else going on in the Regional office at that time was that as the head Secretary, I was told

that some of the secretarial skills needed to be upgraded. We started a Certified Professional Secretary course for the secretaries in the Regional office. The Deputy Regional Directors Secretary and I who had worked together for many years were told that we would take it, and we would pass. We had been taking this Economics course, which was hard. It was not an easy course. We were taking accounting and everything else, and doing all of this after hours. When we had the Forest Conference out there and President Clinton started talking about world economics I realized the reason I was taking this course. It all kind of fell into place, and he made it all very understandable. That was a really exciting time, I thought, to working for the Service. And I felt very privileged to be in on that Conference. I thought that we were making a difference in the world out there. It was fun.

MR. MADISON: It was an exciting time, and you were.

MRS. GROVER: It really was. Of course, I can remember Mark Plennart, the Regional Director saying, "Now just wait until the Salmon are listed". [As an Endangered Species] Of course, it happened. It wasn't so much the Service, because it is the National Marine Fisheries Service that did the listing, but it does affect everything of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Portland, and of all of the people that live there too. Those were very interesting times.

MR. MADISON: Judy, I have to break this off. I have got to go and do the workshop. But this was great! It was just fascinating!

MRS. GROVER: It's an interesting life, Mark!

MR. MADISON: It is an interesting life. It must have been a culture shock going from the Hatcheries to the Regional office to a certain extent, wasn't it?

MRS. GROVER: Yeah, but I think we were ready for it. We had grown. I thought that the five years that we spent in Florida was a growing experience. All of us did. The kids did, too. We were part of a neighborhood, after having only been in this little government complex. You really have kind of a narrow life out there, and maybe that's why people object to being isolated now. We didn't know any better when we started out. The world has grown much in those years, from the late 1950s and early 1960s to the new century.

MR. MADISON: I have to say that off the record... [tape ends]